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THE POSTULATES OF THE MEXICAN SITUATION

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Three years have now passed since the common people of the United States became aware that a volcanic eruption was threatened on the southwest border. At first there was only a little steam in northern Mexico, a gentle earth tremor, which slightly jarred the Diaz administration; then more violent shocks; then a crash and an explosion which blew the whole Diaz government into Kingdom—Gone. After a short period of quietude came another shower of hail-stones and coals of fire, and the Madero government went up in smoke. Ever since that time red hot lava has been pouring out from the craters of Juarez and Chihuahua; and the whole land is covered with smoke and fury. Such a calamity falls alike on the evil and the good. The lives and property of foreigners are not respected by these elemental forces.

Is there no protection, no help, no aid? On the slopes of Aetna the peasants build enormous stone walls to deflect the lava streams. Why not try that method in Mexico? Of what use are such venerable institutions as the administration in Washington, the state department, the *North American Review*, and the American Academy of Political and Social Science, if ashes and scoriae devastate our mines and fields in Mexico? Do something! Get busy! Notify somebody! Stop the volcano from such disgraceful behavior! Send a warship to tell it to be good! Pepper it with machine guns! Let loose the Texan Rangers! Among these shouts the chorus of "Recognize Huerta!" has gradually drowned out the rest. It rises like the war cry of "We want Teddy," as it roars through a Progressive convention. "Recognize Huerta!" "Recognize Huerta!" Colonel Harvey waves his arms and wiggle-waggles his shoulders in the finest cheer master style as he shouts: "Now fellows, all altogether, one, two, three, Recognize Huerta! Recognize Huerta! Recognize Huerta! Tii'ger."

No one can deny or would minimize the present dreadful state of Mexico, or the suffering alike of native Mexicans, European foreigners and citizens of the United States. The trouble is that revo-

lution, civil war, battle, pillage, destruction and murder, are not abnormal in Mexico, but appear to be ordinary conditions of that unhappy land, for which no known remedy has ever been found, though they have sought it with tears. The era of Mexican Revolution began in 1810 and in the hundred and four years since that time the land has seen no more than forty years of internal peace; while not less than twenty-five dictators have galloped across the political stage, each brandishing his sword and crying "Recognize me!" as he disappeared in the wings.

As Admiral Chadwick pointed out in his admirable paper, the fundamental trouble in all the Latin-American countries, and particularly in Mexico, seems to be that the population is substantially of native American origin. So far as can be learned, six to eight millions of the fifteen million Mexicans are unmixed native Indians. Six or seven millions are of mixed race and not more than one million are of unmixed European race. The deduction is simple, namely, that Mexico cannot be classed among nations derived from European stock and infused with European traditions. The presumption is that such a population has not acquired the coolness and political reasonableness which are the basis of modern civilized governments.

The common people of the United States are undoubtedly confused upon this issue because of the supposed success of the thirty-two years of the dominion of Diaz, from 1879 to 1911. He succeeded in deluding his own people, foreign nations and even himself into the belief that Mexico had become so tame that it would eat out of his hand. Diaz maintained his government by two strokes of genius. The first was the enlistment of brigands and other uneasy persons into the corps of "Rurales," or national mounted police. The second was the systematic encouragement of railroads which could carry his troops to scenes of revolt. But anybody who chooses may satisfy himself that Diaz for years remained in power only by the despot's favorite method of closing the mouths of those who criticize the government. Important men were banished or reduced to impotence; the less significant went to prison; and a good many literally went to the wall. Listen to the comment recently quoted with approval by the Mexican newspaper *El Dictamen*, "Under the liberal tyranny of Don Porforio Diaz the wealth and culture of the ruling class of scarcely a million and a half of people increased rapidly, but the

great mass of the community continued to live in the same abject misery."

The world heard much of the enlightened policy of Diaz, but what are the evidences? What did he do to relieve his countrymen from the dreadful curse of peonage which has practically set Mexico very close to slavery? How many boys and girls did his so-called system of popular education teach to read and write? How many communities were allowed even the rudiments of self government? What efforts did he make to break up the crushing system of immense landed estates? How far did he conserve the resources of his country against unfavorable contracts and concessions? What is the size of the fortune which he accumulated as a reward for his immense dignities and powers? The real proof of the hollowness of the régime of this strong man is that though he had behind him the government, the army, the sympathy of foreign powers, and the prestige of thirty-two years of success, his empire crumbled beneath him at last.

The American public does not deny to its neighbors the sacred right of having dictators if they want them; but it is hard to convince the people of this country that dictators self-appointed, backed up by paid armies, and dependent for support upon brute force, can furnish a really good government. Diaz has the same justification as Hiero of Syracuse, or Xerxes of Persia, or Ivan the Terrible of Russia, but no such despotism can ever keep alive without murder, for the despot is a vampire who must always have fresh blood. A few months ago I inquired of a Bulgarian gentleman, who as a boy had lived under the Turkish dispensation, what was his complaint against the Ottoman government. "What was our complaint? That they crushed us to the earth; that whenever a young man arose who might conceivably become the leader of his people, that young man was rooted out." Woe to the country in which the ruler's policy is that of the East Indian monarchs, each of whom as he succeeded to the throne began by putting out the eyes of his younger brothers!

Believing as we Americans do, that the only justification of arbitrary and despotic government is the acquiescence of the people concerned, many of the common people have an instinctive feeling that General Victoriano Huerta, the present self-styled president of Mexico, would not under the most favorable circumstances be likely to endure longer than the one year to three years which has been the term of most of his predecessors.

Colonel Harvey draws a heart-rending picture of the mental sufferings of this provisional constitutional President: "Branded—as an accessory to assassination, deprived of the opportunity to borrow money—cajoled, threatened, cut off from aid whenever possible—remarkable for the consistent dignity, courtesy and consideration exhibited by the old Indian." What is the life history of Victoriano Huerta? Up to 1911 he was a not very conspicuous officer in the army of Diaz, without reputation of any kind beyond the boundaries of his own country. We first heard of him in February, 1913, in the campaign northward to Juarez as a leader of an army of President Madero. Then he used his military authority to depose, imprison and supplant President Madero who had given him his dignity and opportunity. At once he applied for diplomatic recognition, which was accorded by most of the powers of Europe.

The next mark of surpassing greatness was the murder of his former friend and principal. The tale of that transaction as related by this powerful chieftain, is that he sent his predecessor, who was a helpless captive in his hands, from one prison to another at night, with an escort so slender that when the cortege was attacked it was unable to protect its prisoner, and he was consequently shot by his friends. The "strong man" takes refuge from the obvious charge of murder, behind the plea that he was so inept an administrator, and so timorous a commander, that he could not secure the safety of a state prisoner, nor obedience to his orders by his most trusted troops, within a mile of his own palace.

To some minds the proof against Huerta is incomplete; and the title to the presidency rests on an assumed constitutional basis. The facts seem to be as follows: Huerta arrested Madero and the vice-president and declared their offices vacant. Thereupon the minister of foreign affairs constitutionally became president. His term lasted about a quarter of an hour, and his only official acts were to appoint Huerta to a cabinet office and then to resign; whereupon Huerta, as holder of the highest cabinet office, became "provisional president." A few days after Madero's murder he styled himself "provisional but constitutional president."

The next evidence of statesmanship was in October, 1913, when a senator of the Mexican Republic, who unlike Huerta, had gone through the form of an election, was seized by the orders of the head of that state, who was so powerful that he was afraid his government

would be overthrown by a public criticism from a fellow Mexican. Then he imprisoned 110 members of Congress because his policy was so generally approved that he could not allow a single man to stand up in his place and express his mind in opposition.

Even such assassins frequently have the animal attribute of personal belligerency, and the willingness to risk their lives for the defence of their rule; Santa Anna, one of the most slippery and contemptible of all Mexican tyrants, commanded two armies which measured swords with the American forces. But where has General Huerta been during the fierce campaigns of the north? Town after town under his protection has been taken by forces of Mexicans which were little better than organized brigands; and the general and president has remained serenely in his capital. A short time ago the city of Torreon, the gateway to the city of Mexico, was besieged, and battered, but the military head of the republic has not stirred to animate his own troops, or to share their danger. Such amateurs as Caesar, Frederick the Great, Napoleon, and Bolivar, found time in the intervals of state-craft to lead armies to victory. Somehow, the uninstructed think President Huerta is a *roi faineant*, who sends others to fight his battles, but avoids the villainous powder smoke.

Every such dictator in the experience of Mexico has had to suffer from dastardly contra-dictators, who have felt that their superb courage, popularity and patriotism gave them the same right as the head of the state to dispense with ordinary humanity. Among the rivals to Huerta the most notable is Carranza, who to the uninstructed American public seems to be a badly carved figurehead, animated with Huerta's desperate determination that other men shall fight and die for him at a distance. Nevertheless by his published instructions to Villa to murder his prisoners he has put himself outside the pale of civilized men. If he really possesses authority, he must take the responsibility of committing the conduct of his campaigns to General Villa, a professional brigand, skilled in making war in the benign fashion of the Tartar, the Kaffir, and the Apache, a man who combines the qualities of a train robber, a pickpocket and a New York gunman.

In international law, in ordinary morals, and in the sight of Almighty God, Villa's habit of killing non-combatants, men, women, and children, is nothing else but plain, despicable murder; murder without any military advantage; murder for the sake of killing. One

of his recent achievements has been to order the homicide of two hundred men (who had thrown down their arms) on the plea that unless he shot them they would form up again, automatically arm themselves, and attack him in the rear. Villa's plea is that of the bull-dog, that he must eat the rabbit because otherwise that animal will bite his tail off. He has as much capacity for civilized government as a bull in a ring. The plain American people have just the same aversion for Villa that they have for Huerta or for any other man who seizes upon power in order that he may benefit himself and massacre his enemies.

In international law it is a safe rule that every government which actually represents a nation is entitled to recognition and to diplomatic intercourse. But amid the dust and gore of Mexico it is difficult to distinguish a figure which seems to deserve official recognition by the United States of America. I freely accept the principle that the personal character of Huerta or of Villa, though a factor in forming a judgment as to Mexican character and government, is not a determining reason for refusing to recognize one or the other. So far as the President and secretary of state have made the personal behavior of those leaders a reason for refusing to have relations with them, they have departed from the precedents of American diplomacy. Our government has been rather under than over solicitous as to the private character of the heads of other governments. A country which three times recognized Santa Anna, and which recognized the most recent dictator of Peru by return mail, has no right to be finicky over Huerta's behavior. But behavior is a different thing from legal authority. Colonel Harvey denounces President Wilson for not giving a full opportunity "to the only government, however discreditable, that does exist, and the only really strong man, however disreputable, who has appeared." To his mind the policy of the administration is as if "one president declares war upon another president." Against this dictum I confidently protest. The rightful policy of our government is negative rather than positive. The probable and sufficient reason for not recognizing Huerta as President of the Mexican Republic is simply that he has never given evidence that he is President of the Mexican Republic, or indeed that he is the choice of the Mexican nation for any office or dignity. Who was it that declared him to be "provisional president" February 19, 1913? General Victoriano Huerta. Who proclaimed him to be "provisional but con-

stitutional president" February 27? General Victoriano Huerta. How did the vacancy occur in the office of constitutional president? Through the assassination of President Madero and Vice-President Suarez, while in the custody of men acting under the orders of General Victoriano Huerta. Who profited by this crime, and thereby made himself at best (or at worst) an accessory after the fact? Victoriano Huerta. Who has arrested people who questioned his title, imprisoned, banished or executed, right and left? Victoriano Huerta. Who dissolved the coördinate legislative branch of the Mexican government and sent its members to prison on the tyrant's usual charge of conspiracy? Victoriano Huerta. By whose directions have taxes and forced loans been made? That of Victoriano Huerta. If the question were that of recognizing a newly created nation of Victoriano Huerta by its sister power the United States of America, the case would be absolutely complete; every person, corporation, entity, and unit of government, comprehended within the broad term Victoriano Huerta, is unanimous in placing the entire public authority in the hands of Victoriano Huerta.

Nevertheless, the only question of international law and practice which the department of state has been called upon to decide is whether the man who calls himself president of Mexico is either *de jure* or *de facto* the president of Mexico. Geographically he is plainly not the president of all Mexico, for at least a third of its area is outside of his authority. From a military point of view he is not the head of the Mexican republic, because his forces have been defeated by rebel armies in every pitched battle for many months. Constitutionally he is not president of Mexico for he is not flanked by a congress chosen in an open election. As the wielder of supreme authority for the time being he is not entitled to recognition, because he is visibly afraid to leave his capital even to defend his government against armed enemies.

It is true as Colonel Harvey says that "the manner in which the Mexicans see fit to change their rulers is none of our business;" but is it not our business to observe whether the Mexicans have changed their government? Colonel Harvey feels sure that if Huerta had been recognized he would have brought about peace by this time, because he is the strongest man in sight. And Huerta makes the plea that all he needs to secure his power is recognition by our govern-

ment. What better proof could there be that his power is feeble, unstable and temporary? The United States would have been glad to be recognized by our neighbor Spain in 1781, but no such recognition was necessary: the United States was independent simply because it was independent. From 1821 to 1826 Mexico lacked the recognition of Great Britain, yet cheerfully maintained independence. When Louis Napoleon seized the power in France in 1851 he was not dependent on the recognition of other nations but on the acceptance of his rule by his countrymen. In what manner has the United States, as Colonel Harvey asserts, "deprived Huerta of the means of effective striving?"

Another argument for recognition for Huerta is that otherwise our government must recognize the Constitutionals. To the uninstructed mind this point of view recalls the colored minister's appeal: "Oh, my hearers, do you realize that there is stretching before you at this moment two roads—one of those roads leads to eternal damnation, and the other to everlasting perdition—oh, my hearers, which road will you choose?" The common people look upon the two political organizations which are wrestling with each other in Mexico as about equally removed from the third and narrow way which leads neither to damnation nor perdition; and some Americans congratulate themselves that the government of the United States has taken no responsibility for either of those so-called governments.

The most familiar starting point for the Harvey cheering section with its "Recognize Huerta!" is that he is the strong man, who only needs recognition by the United States to bring about order and good government. It is fair to ask why this particular strong man should succeed where failures were recorded by Iturbide, Bustamente, Aristomente, Santa Anna, Comonfort, Miramon, and Madero. The *Berliner Tageblatt* which ought to know a strong man when it sees him, is sure that Huerta is "exactly the man that Mexico at this juncture needs." But if Mexico needs him, what prevents Mexico from having him? If by a "strong man" is meant only one who can by brute force compel 15,000,000 people to obey him against their will, then the man for President of Mexico is evidently not Huerta but Hagenbeck, the lion-tamer, with his whip and revolver to encourage his loving subjects. The mention of lions suggests Wallace Irwin's conception of a strong character:

Adolphus I am hungree,
And rather faint am I,
Pray be so good as give to me
A morsel of your pie.

The lion ate Adolphus' pie
With all politeness due,
Then pausing with a grateful sigh
He ate Adolphus too.

Then rising with a thoughtful roar
He sauntered down the plain,
A stronger, better lion for
Adolphus' deed humane.

I for one, protest against the argument that it is the moral duty of the United States to help into power a man of a type against whom every man would take up arms, if he were an American and tried to make himself dictator of the United States. What is the use of dubbing as "Constitutional," a process of murder and seizing on offices which would justify revolution, if it were tried here? Why excuse and extol a man who, if he tried his policy within the bounds of the United States, would be stoned out of civilized society!

Doubtless many people are led to believe that Huerta is the government of Mexico, because he occupies the national capital, gives orders to an army and is supported by his troops so long as he is able to pay the price. After General Miramon in 1858 became "president substitute" and was recognized by most of the European powers, Secretary Cass instructed Minister McLean that possession of the Mexican capital was not an essential condition of the recognition of the government; that he should recognize no government unless it was "obeyed over a large majority of the country, and the people, and was likely to continue." President Buchanan thought that since Miramon "was himself a military usurper, having expelled the constitutional president from office, it would have been a lasting disgrace to the Mexican people had they tamely submitted to the yoke."

The fact is that there is no constitutional or international reason why at present anybody must be recognized in Mexico. It would have been well for the world if earlier administrations had been less hasty in recognizing dictators whose careers were destined to be short. It is not true, even though the *London Spectator* says so, that "the

alternatives are to recognize whatever president has at the moment climbed to power (or) to act as though Mexico were no longer an independent country." If there are now two organizations in Mexico, neither of which can show any proof that it is desired by the Mexican people, the obvious common sense course would seem to be to recognize neither of them. As Lincoln said in his famous speech in Chicago about slavery, "I protest now and forever, against that counterfeit logic which presumes that because I do not want a negro woman for a slave, I do necessarily want her for a wife. My understanding is that I need not have her for either; but, as God made us separate, we can leave one another alone, and do to one another much good thereby."

Is there a Mexican people? Is there a popular will? Is there any known means of determining that will? That is of course the radical issue for Mexico and the Mexicans. Inasmuch as since 1821 there have been over twenty military despots, and only two elections at which there was an open and unstressed opportunity for the Mexicans to vote for a president, the prospect of a genuinely popular government is discouraging. Apparently most of the Mexican people would accept any just and moderate government which was once firmly seated; but with the single exception of Diaz, the "strong men" have never furnished anything approaching a just and moderate government,—certainly not Huerta. The Mexican tyrant loves the trappings of tyranny. Our American despots are satisfied with the actual control of conventions, legislatures, governors and parties; but the Mexican wants all that, and in addition, a cocked hat, sabre, presidential palace, and bullet-proof automobile. We are not too far from the ordinary habits of Mexican life; bandits have recently attacked railroad trains in Massachusetts and Illinois; and a candidate for the governorship of a southwestern state seems to rest his claims on the fact that he served a term in prison for being captain of brigands; the beginning of civil war may be seen in Colorado. But the American people have the habit of accepting a defeat in a political election, cordially recognizing the candidates elected by the other party, and then organizing to beat them at the next election. Such patience and forbearance seem lacking in the Mexican character; with them it is rule or ruin. So long as recognition waits upon the existence of a stable government, it may have long to wait.

There is a positive and pressing need for official understanding

with some authority in Mexico because the property and lives of foreigners, including many American citizens, are in daily danger. Some of that property arises from questionable dealings with defunct governments, much of it is fairly and honestly won against great difficulties. Most of the Americans who have established themselves in Mexico did so under a government which seemed likely to retain its authority and keep the peace. Our government owes to those people moral support at all times, and protection in case of need. Of course that protection can be offered without recognition of this or that Mexican government; and it is difficult to see how a constitutional president who cannot defend the lives and property of his own adherents in the north, could by recognition become suddenly powerful enough to defend Americans in the south. The main difficulty is not recognition, nor even the weakness of Mexican government, but in an instability of Mexican character, which seems to make good government impossible. We have been misled by the exceptional endurance of the Diaz régime. Leaving that one administration out of account, no government in Mexico has ever been much aided by American recognition, or much marred by the lack of it.

Then what is to be done? How is the United States to protect its nationals, or to make effective those claims for millions of dollars which will soon come pouring in, and which in the last resort will have to be paid by the Mexican taxpayer? Failing recognition, intervention has been demanded. If by intervention is meant the military occupation of Mexico with a view to the pacification of the country, and then the withdrawal of troops, there have been some experiences that seem like precedents. Buchanan vainly sought from Congress in 1859 authority to send an army into Mexico, to break up the Miramon government, and thus open the way for the Juarez government. Even when the French were in Mexico, no American troops ever crossed the border.

It seems tolerably clear that any American expedition would forthwith bring about some approach to a real national government by making every decent Mexican ready to meet the Americans, as Tom Corwin put it in 1846, "to welcome them with bloody hands to hospitable graves." For, strange as it may seem, the Mexicans, who have never learned how to develop the resources of their country, or to give it dignity among nations, have an inveterate love of their own land, a furious hatred of those who attempt to diminish their

territory, and a willingness to die in its defence, which among more highly organized nations might be called patriotism.

Allowing that intervention should begin, when and how is it to end? That is a question of more significance to us than to the Mexicans. Excellent military authorities think that a force of 200,000 men would not be too large for the purpose, which would be by far the largest army ever moved from one country to another in America. And when would that country be ready to take care of itself again? Sixteen years we have been civilizing the Filipinos up to the point where they are unanimous only on one thing, namely, that they want us to leave. Nothing less than a similar experience of education in language, science, and self-government would much affect the disposition of the Mexican people.

Supposing that our physical means are sufficient for the task of holding down Mexico, have we not sufficient race and color questions already? Are we so far advanced in the amalgamation of European races, much nearer to us than the Mexicans are in culture and standards, that we can undertake a similar task at long range upon an unwilling people? Is Cuba so certain to remain a dependency instead of to become an integral part of the United States, that we can undertake a problem many times more difficult? Have we been so successful in the fair treatment and civilization of our own 300,000 Indians that we wish to be responsible for 14,000,000 more? Is the government of Boston, New York and Philadelphia so firmly established on principles of truth and righteousness that we can now transfer our energies to the uplift of Tampico and Mazatlan, and the city of Mexico? Von Moltke used to say that he had worked out three different detailed plans for the invasion of England by a German army, but he never could contrive a plan for getting the army back again. A stroke of the pen can send an army into Mexico! How many strokes of the sword will be needed to keep it there?